CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL RECORD OF THE SEVEN HUNDRED AND TWENTY-SIXTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 22 February 1996, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Ramaker (Netherlands)

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The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 726th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

On behalf of the Conference, and on my own behalf, I should like, at the outset, to extend a warm welcome to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, His Excellency Dr. Ali Akbar Velayati, who will address the Conference today. Over the past years, Dr. Velayati has addressed the Conference many times and his presence among us yet again testifies to the abiding interest of his Government in our work and to the importance it attaches to our forum, especially at this crucial time when the Conference is intensifying its efforts to conclude the negotiations on a comprehensive test-ban treaty. I am sure that the Conference will listen to his statement with keen interest.

I also have on my list of speakers for today the representative of Mexico.

However, before giving the floor to the speakers inscribed today, allow me to make a few opening remarks at the start of my presidency.

At the start of the Netherlands presidency of the Conference on Disarmament I owe a word of sincere thanks to my immediate predecessors, Ambassador Benjelloun-Touimi of Morocco and Ambassador U Aye of the Union of Myanmar. It is with some trepidation that I follow in their footsteps. There are mainly two reasons for that.

First, their two presidencies taken together span almost half a year. Active as they were, both during the CD sessions and in the long inter-sessional period that they covered, they gathered a wealth of experience that I will not even try to match in the four weeks of my tenure. Secondly, the outstanding way in which each of them performed their duties as President of the Conference instills in me some modesty. During his presidency, Ambassador Benjelloun-Touimi, amongst other things, could reach, after extensive consultations and hard work, agreement on a first concrete step on the road towards a solution of the question of the expansion of the membership of the Conference, a problem with which the Conference, as you know, has wrestled for so long. Having had a long and effective presidency, Ambassador Aye deserves our gratitude if only for the way in which he secured the smooth and immediate resumption of the work of the Conference at the beginning of this year's session on 23 January.

Clearly, and Ambassador Aye was the first to observe this in his closing remarks last week, the fact that we could immediately, at the very beginning of this year's session of the Conference, take up our substantive work, reflects the priority we collectively attach at this moment to the negotiations on a comprehensive test-ban treaty. While occupying the presidency of this Conference, it is precisely this collective priority we have given to the CTBT negotiations which will make it necessary for me to give at the same time my undiminished attention, in my capacity as Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban, to these negotiations.

(The President)

My twin capacities as President of the Conference on Disarmament and Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban entail, of course, a heavy workload for me for the next four weeks. But as far as the CTBT negotiations are concerned, I know I can count on the full cooperation of the chairmen of the two working groups, Ambassador Berdennikov of the Russian Federation and Ambassador Zahran of Egypt, as well as of the various Friends of the Chairs.

So while the CTBT negotiations, as I trust you will understand, will never be far from my mind, I will not neglect the responsibilities flowing from my presidency of this Conference. The Conference, for more than one reason, goes at present through a crucial period of its existence. First, because it is under its auspices that currently the negotiations on a comprehensive nuclear-test ban are taking place. This means that, more than maybe ever before, the eyes of the world are upon the Conference. But secondly because, while these negotiations are going on, we have to address the question of what priority tasks the Conference shall take up once these negotiations, later during the session, will be over.

It is therefore highly appropriate that right at the beginning of this session consensus could be reached to appoint a Special Coordinator, in the person of Ambassador Meghlaoui of Algeria to consult on the review of the future agenda of the Conference as well as on organizational arrangements to deal with the issues of: the prohibition of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices; effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons; prevention of an arms race in outer space; and transparency in armaments. In my opinion, Ambassador Meghlaoui has taken upon himself a task which, under the present circumstances, is an extremely important one. Ideally, the result of his endeavours should be a modernized agenda of this Conference, reflecting the needs, possibilities and priorities of this body, responsible as it is for multilateral negotiations on arms control and disarmament questions under the new conditions of the post-cold-war world. During my tenure I intend to remain in close contact on this with Ambassador Meghlaoui, and I wish him every success in his endeavours.

My immediate predecessor took upon himself intensive consultations with regard to nuclear disarmament and this, as he put it, "with a view to developing a basis for consensus on this issue and to report to the Conference at the earliest opportunity". In his closing statement at last week's plenary meeting, Ambassador Aye shared with us the results of his consultations on this question. It is my intention to continue consultations on this issue, for which many delegations see a role for the CD as well, so as to find out whether a basis can be found to take up this question in this forum.

The question of the expansion of the membership of the Conference is foremost in the minds of both members and non-members of the Conference. The impatience with which those non-members present in this room who applied for membership await the decision of the Conference to receive them in their midst is fully understandable. Although, as I just said, an important first step towards a solution of this question has been taken, we are all aware of the

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obstacles that remain. I shall continue to consult both within the membership of the Conference as with non-member delegations, be they from the group which, according to decision CD/1356, will assume together membership of the Conference at the earliest possible date, or from those applicants outside that group.

At the outset of my presidency I am looking forward to closely cooperating with you in the discharge of my functions as your President. I sincerely hope that the outcome of my endeavours will be positive and I intend to report to you on the progress made in the discharge of the responsibilities during the final plenary meeting of the Conference under my presidency.

I should now like to give the floor to His Excellency Dr. Ali Akbar Velayati, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. VELAYATI (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, I should like first of all to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference as well as on your chairmanship of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban. I also thank Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, Secretary-General of the Conference, and his deputy, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, for their hard work and continued support to the Conference.

We have just surpassed half a century of living under the terror and agony of a nuclear war. We have witnessed crisis situations resulting from regional conflicts in which use of nuclear weapons seemed imminent. Nuclear explosions have been abundant, contributing continuously to systematic qualitative and quantitative progression of nuclear weapons. A frenzied nuclear arms race prevailed over a hazed perception of nuclear deterrence. Those immediate threats and the constant perils of a nuclear catastrophe have diminished as the result of the end of the cold war. Yet, the continued existence of nuclear weapons remains the most serious concern of humanity and its total elimination poses the greatest challenge to this new era.

To undo what has been done in five long decades is, of course, not a trivial task. One could in fact imagine a long and tedious process. Essential, however, is that the process should start and should include a step-by-step approach which attempts to bring the goal of nuclear disarmament as clearly into reach as possible.

We, the non-nuclear-weapon States, gave up the nuclear option long ago and decided to forgo that option indefinitely at the NPT Review and Extension Conference. That decision, it was agreed, was not to be interpreted as legitimizing permanent possession of nuclear weapons by a few. It was, to the contrary, arrived at with the fundamental understanding that negotiations for elimination of nuclear weapons would be pursued expeditiously and resolutely. This understanding prompted the non-aligned countries to introduce a resolution to the United Nations General Assembly calling on the Conference on Disarmament to engage in negotiations on nuclear disarmament.

I wish to encourage the Conference to continue to search for ways so that such negotiations could commence. One cannot, of course, expect that negotiations would immediately focus on detailed provisions of a treaty on

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total elimination. Various possibilities need to be examined and feasible approaches identified. Yet, the fact that such negotiations would be complex and multidimensional and involve many parameters and elements should not mask the need and the requirement to address these issues at this Conference.

We have agreed to conclude the comprehensive test-ban treaty this year. We have also agreed to start negotiations on the prohibition of weapon-related fissile material. The question is what step or steps are to be taken next. I am aware that positions differ here. There have even been arguments to the effect that no further multilateral treaties could be envisaged beyond the CTBT and the "cut-off". This could lead to erosion of confidence within the Conference at a time when it is needed most. I firmly believe that if the commitment for elimination of nuclear weapons is firm and solid, discussions and negotiations could, certainly, lead us to a vision on how and through what further steps we can arrive at realizing this objective. I hope that the Conference can reach an understanding on this sensitive and significant issue and, hence, remove the clouds that have overshadowed its activities and particularly the CTBT negotiations.

We have come a long way since the 1958 trilateral Conference on Discontinuance of Nuclear Weapon Tests. The multilateral 1963 partial test-ban Treaty as well as the bilateral 1974 threshold test-ban Treaty and the 1976 peaceful nuclear explosions Treaty have all been limited in scope. A comprehensive treaty, repeatedly called for by non-nuclear-weapon States ever since the 1950s, was finally confirmed unanimously at the 1995 NPT Conference and is now within our reach. We need to seize the momentum and make sure the opportunity created is not missed.

The Conference on Disarmament has done tremendous work in the last three years and has examined, in depth, all the aspects of the treaty. As a result, all necessary and elemental ingredients for the CTBT are now at our disposal. The state of negotiations as reflected in the rolling text still indicates divergencies of positions and views in nearly all areas. Yet, the majority of differences, as we are all aware, are of a political nature. They, thus, need to be resolved politically.

We have conducted a thorough study of the text, examined the diverging positions (1,219 brackets by the latest count) and traced them back to their origins. This has led us, as could perhaps be predicted, to a few distinct issues which have branched off into the text and became wider apart as they moved deeper into details. The most predominant ones include the treaty's nature and scope, verification and on-site inspection including their detailed procedures as well as organizational issues and the entry into force. What is important, therefore, is to perceive a middle ground - a package so to speak - which may constitute a compromise amongst the various and, at times, contradictory positions.

It is generally understood that the CTBT would halt modernization of second-generation nuclear weapons and arrest the race for gaining superiority and nuclear war-fighting capability through their third generation. The CTBT aims, therefore, to end the qualitative improvement and development of nuclear weapons systems and should be considered as a step towards nuclear

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disarmament. Achievement of an agreement for total elimination of all nuclear weapons at the earliest possible date within a time-bound framework could also be declared a principal aim. This would reflect, in a moderate way, the position of the great majority of the States. These aims could appropriately be included in the preamble of the treaty.

On the scope, given the strong aspirations of the international community for a comprehensive ban, no nuclear test in any place and at whatever yield should be permitted. A provision for peaceful nuclear explosions within the scope, therefore, could create a loophole in the treaty which would lead to suspicion during its implementation and eventually undermine the treaty. Furthermore, it is a strong view that academic and scientific studies have, so far, not recognized any real civil benefit from nuclear explosions. Science, however, is not absolute in its assertions.

The CTBT is a treaty intended to last through decades or even generations. Its duration is indeed unlimited. It would hence seem reasonable to envisage, exceptionally and under stringent conditions, the possibility of peaceful explosions if the real benefits of nuclear explosions for the sole purpose of purely peaceful scientific research and civilian applications are demonstrated in the future. The conditions for acceptance should be set in a manner to make use of this provision possible only when - in a sense - peaceful benefits have been recognized universally. Even then, an explosion of this nature would only be conducted under strict international monitoring. Without attempting to broaden the scope, therefore, stipulations may be made to this effect within the powers and functions of the Conference of States Parties.

Much time has been spent to develop a verification mechanism which would both deter violations and detect them if they ever take place. Extensive technical considerations, particularly by the Group of Scientific Experts, have demonstrated that verification can reliably be achieved with coverage of stations operating under the four monitoring networks. This presents a sufficient basis for the treaty to start while it does not preclude the examination of potential additional technologies and their possible inclusion in the system in the future. Moreover, the proposal by the Russian Federation to place four of the proposed seismic and radionuclide stations at the existing nuclear test sites would further improve the system and could be incorporated following an agreement by the nuclear-weapon States. Introduction of national technical means, on the other hand, entails more complications than benefits and could put into question the reliability and validity of international verification. Verification of compliance with the treaty should be solely based on the data collected from the international monitoring system.

The verification system needs to be completed with provisions for on-site inspection to investigate possible violations. An on-site inspection will principally be a rare event which needs to be conducted effectively. The States parties, as a rule, shall first resort to consultation and clarification. But, this should not affect the timely conduct of on-site inspection where and when necessary. In order to register and record the

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time-critical features of the testing the inspection team should be able to visit the site quickly. This visit would be limited only to visual observations.

If needed, a consecutive inspection may be conducted in an intrusive manner provided that the Executive Council, after thorough review and assessment of the initial inspection report, decides on the inspection by a two-thirds majority of all members present and voting. The Executive Council shall supervise the conduct of OSI and have the right to halt it if it considers the inspection frivolous or abusive. In other words, a red light applies to the initial phase of the inspection whereas a green light is required for the consecutive phase. In my view this approach, taking on board the concerns of many countries, presents a balanced compromise.

With regard to formulations concerning the detailed rules of preparation and inspection activities, the chemical weapons Convention, which has been negotiated not a long time ago, provides a very useful source. In many areas such as designation of inspectors, standing arrangements, conduct of inspections, managed access, the role of the observer and post-inspection activities, the same procedures could be adopted taking into account specific requirements of the CTBT.

It is evident that with the coming into effect of the CTBT nuclear test sites will no longer have any relevance. It would be useful therefore that, as an associated and transparency measure, States parties would decide to close the test sites and destroy equipment specifically designed for nuclear testing. Transparency would also be served through submission of declarations on nuclear tests carried out in the past as well as notifications of chemical explosions of over 300 tons of TNT equivalent, as has been suggested.

The treaty would be most successful if all nuclear-weapon States in addition to other advanced nuclear States accede to it at the time of entry into force. It has, at the same time, been rightly argued that the treaty should not become hostage to the decision, or indecision, of one or two States. We should bear in mind, in this regard, that 68 States are listed by IAEA as those which have, have ever had, or have under construction nuclear power or nuclear research reactors. We could, therefore, stipulate that accession by 65 States out of the 68 would trigger the entry into force, leaving a rather safe margin of 3 to avoid undue delay.

This should be viewed along with an undertaking by the States parties, similar to that which is included in the NPT, not to transfer nuclear materials, equipment and technology to non-parties without application of full-scope IAEA safeguards. Such an undertaking would, of course, serve as an additional disincentive for States who refrain from accession.

We have always considered Vienna as the most suitable place to serve as the seat of the organization for the CTBT and believe that this enjoys consensus. There is also an overwhelming view that the CTBT needs an independent organization which may benefit from existing international expertise and facilities such as IAEA. The CTBT would be funded by the States parties in accordance with the United Nations scale of assessment, adjusted to

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take into account the differences in the membership between the United Nations and this organization. Cost of data transmission, establishment of new monitoring stations and upgrading of existing stations essential to the operation of international monitoring system would be met by the organization.

The CTBTO would include an Executive Council with elaborate and important powers and functions. It should fully represent the anticipated high number of parties to this treaty. The number of 65 for its membership seems reasonable. Regional groups would elect their representatives based on the number of seats allocated to them taking into account certain relevant criteria. Notions of permanency or special status have been broadly objected to and should be avoided, as any form of pre-arranged designation runs counter to the basic norms of democratic procedures. Regional groups, of course, have the right to re-elect a certain State or States taking into account certain criteria if they so choose.

Dear friends, you are working against time. I praise your commitment to the negotiations and to their conclusion this year. As we approach the perceived deadline, the need for ways to achieve a breakthrough becomes increasingly pressing. We, for our share, have been actively seized with this matter. Lengthy, careful and detailed deliberations have guided us to a possible compromise text for the treaty, aspects of which I just described. I wish to present this text today and make it available to you to study and consider. The text by no means intends to avert or divert the current course of negotiations. Nor is it meant as a substitute. The sole effect that we hope it would produce is to encourage all interlocutors to consider possibilities for reasonable agreements both on the broader conceptual differences as well as the details and the wordings. One thing I can say about this text is that none of the protagonists would find their positions fully reflected in it although each, I assure you, would find some. The underlying approach is of course based on compromise by all and a balance for all. I hope that you will find this text useful and that it will contribute to serve the negotiations positively as deemed.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Mexico, Ambassador de Icaza.

Mr. de ICAZA (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, as I am taking the floor for the first time this year in the plenary of the Conference on Disarmament, I extend my sincere congratulations to you on your election as Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on nuclear tests, as well as to the Ambassadors of the Russian Federation and Egypt on being elected to chair the work of the groups of that Committee. I am certain that the guidance of such experienced negotiators will facilitate the goal we have set ourselves of concluding a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty which is internationally and effectively verifiable in time for its signature in early autumn, as we were requested by the United Nations General Assembly in the resolution that it fell to my delegation to table and which was adopted without a vote. My Government gives priority, within its foreign policy objectives for this year, to realizing that aspiration of the international community, and we welcome the fact that in this crucial stage of our negotiations you,

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Ambassador Ramaker, have taken up the Chair of the Conference. We know your commitment to the cause of the cessation of testing and we have the highest opinion of your abilities. These simultaneous appointments are certainly a happy coincidence from which we expect a great deal. You may count on our resolute support and dedicated cooperation.

In recent weeks we have heard in this hall a debate on nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the nuclear test ban whose intensity might lead one to believe - as in fact some of the media seem to have done - that our negotiations are bogged down or about to be bogged down. My delegation believes that these concerns are not warranted, or at least they are not warranted as yet.

Firstly, it is inherent in the dynamics of any negotiation, especially when the stage of key decisions and practical concessions is reached, that the tone of the debates rises, reproaches are exchanged, others' positions are exaggerated or distorted, or even hidden or unavowable motives are attributed to divergent positions. It is in fact a game of distorting mirrors characteristic of multilateral negotiations, and it is usually a prelude to difficult agreements. But it is a dangerous game and it must be controlled if there is a genuine desire to arrive at positive results.

Secondly, even in the most categorical statements it is clear that positions have been less inflexible than the tone has suggested. Moreover, in this impassioned debate, the silences have been eloquent: no one has cast doubt on the priority need to achieve a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty this year; no one has denied the importance of non-proliferation for international security; no one has denied the ultimate objective of a world without nuclear weapons, nor that the Conference on Disarmament has a role to play in the field of nuclear disarmament.

Thirdly, despite the fact that the rhetoric has succeeded in insinuating that achieving nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty are mutually exclusive, antagonistic exercises, and pursuing one would mean jeopardizing another, it is an indisputable, non-controversial fact that as far as all the participants are concerned, our negotiations fall within the context of the mandate set out in paragraph 51 of the programme of action adopted by consensus at the first special session of the General Assembly on disarmament, which says: "The cessation of nuclear-weapon testing by all States within the context of an effective nuclear disarmament process would be in the interest of mankind. It would make a significant contribution to the ... aim of ending the qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons and the development of new types of such weapons and of preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons." For those of us who are also parties to the non-proliferation Treaty, our negotiations on the prohibition of testing fall, moreover, within the programme of action on nuclear disarmament included in the principles and objectives adopted without a vote by the NPT Review and Extension Conference in 1995.

Fourthly, we all know that the effectiveness of the non-proliferation regime depends on systematic and progressive efforts to reduce nuclear arsenals globally, with the ultimate goal of eliminating them, and that

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these efforts will be successful only within the context of an effective non-proliferation regime. It is pointless to speculate on whether the chicken or the egg comes first. In fact, let us all resign ourselves to the fact: there will be no nuclear disarmament without non-proliferation, nor will there be non-proliferation without nuclear disarmament.

Mexico believes that an unprecedented political opportunity currently exists to realize aspirations of the international community set out decades ago - the signing of a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty and the negotiation of a broad phased programme with an agreed time-frame for the progressive reduction of nuclear armaments and their delivery systems, which will lead as soon as possible to their complete and definitive elimination. Both goals are important for the strengthening of international peace and security and to promote a climate of confidence among States, and both can be reached in a parallel and unlinked manner. There is no reason for the efforts to achieve either of the above objectives to hamper or hinder achievement of the other. On the contrary - the comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty, which we have all set ourselves the task of concluding this year, should be not only an important non-proliferation measure but first and foremost an essential element for the cessation of the nuclear arms race and in order to take a first step towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

At the last United Nations General Assembly my delegation co-sponsored the resolution in which it was agreed to call upon this Conference on Disarmament, the sole multilateral negotiating forum in this field, to establish, on a priority basis, an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament to undertake negotiations on a phased programme for the final elimination of nuclear weapons within a definite time-frame. This is a long-standing Mexican position, because my delegation had earlier promoted and succeeded in having adopted a resolution entitled "Step-by-step reduction of the nuclear threat", whose essential elements were reflected at the last session of the General Assembly in the resolution in which the international community for the first time adopted the concept of the total elimination of nuclear weapons within a definite time-frame. My delegation is convinced that this Conference is duty-bound to arrive at an institutional arrangement to undertake negotiations in order to respond to the request of the General Assembly. Our country believes that the conclusion of a CTBT should facilitate and give impetus to the process towards the development of a programme for the reduction and elimination of nuclear weapons. This step-by-step programme could contain, for instance, among others, measures designed to reduce the nuclear threat, halt the manufacture and upgrading of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems and reduce nuclear armaments to minimum levels, ultimately consolidating nuclear disarmament through the conclusion of an agreement for the prohibition of the use, production and possession of nuclear weapons. In the meantime we must give the highest priority to concluding the comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty. Although some technical questions remain, we already have the necessary elements and information to step up our work and adopt the outstanding political decisions which will enable us to conclude the text before next summer. These decisions are important but few in number.

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As regards scope, it would seem that we are coming close to a consensus around a formula that would prohibit weapons testing by means of nuclear explosions, and any other nuclear explosion. There would appear to be an understanding that the purpose of the treaty is to prohibit tests that enable the qualitative improvement of existing nuclear weapons, and also to prohibit the development of new weapons and even technologies which lead to the use of small nuclear yields. In order that there should be no doubt about the meaning of the formula on scope, it will be necessary for the understanding on the purpose of the treaty to be set out in a binding manner somewhere in the treaty.

Mexico is in favour of a simple formula for the entry into force of the treaty which will ensure its practical application while not making its validity subject to the will of a State or a group of States.

Monitoring of the smooth running of the CTBT must be in keeping with the activity which it is intended to prohibit and with the treaty verification requirements. IAEA has the necessary machinery and experience in this field. Mexico would also favour the creation of an independent organization, located in Vienna, having close links with the International Atomic Energy Agency. An organization of this type would mean savings, by making use of IAEA support in areas where the Agency has experience in verification questions, such as on-site inspections, the monitoring of radionuclides, the collection and analysis of samples and verification of the operation of sophisticated technical instruments.

The membership of the Executive Council is important in ensuring the smooth application of the treaty. We are in favour of a membership which respects the principles of legal equality, equitable geographical distribution and periodic rotation.

Mexico favours the idea that the CTBT organization should carry out a preliminary evaluation of the information to be produced by the international monitoring system so that all the States parties have the necessary technical information for the proper interpretation of data.

We listened most carefully to the words of His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iran. We thank him for the text he has submitted and we congratulate his delegation on the structuring and rationalization effort reflected in this text. I should like to assure the Minister that my Foreign Ministry is studying the text most carefully. In a preliminary assessment we perceive that it puts forward interesting solutions to difficult problems and we believe that this Conference must consider them thoroughly as a whole. This is a very valuable contribution. Thank you, Mr. Minister.

It is our declared priority, in a resolution adopted as a whole without a vote in the United Nations General Assembly, to sign a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty at the beginning of the next session of the Assembly this autumn. We are close to our goal, certain that all the participants in the negotiations are prompted by the resolute political will necessary to reach agreements on the items outstanding. It is important that in this last phase of delicate negotiations all States should avoid as far as possible

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distracting us from our immediate objective and damaging the environment of cooperation and mutual understanding essential to our success. It is especially important that no tests or experiments related to nuclear weapons should be carried out, as they might cast doubt on the will to cease the nuclear arms race or the significance of the scope of the draft treaty. It is also important that our differences on the agenda of the Conference, and on our future programme of work, should not delay our proceedings. We must all make a last effort at moderation for the sake of securing a treaty which we have aspired to for 42 years, since it was suggested by the Prime Minister of India in 1954.

The representative of Myanmar, who bore the responsibility of presiding over this Conference at the outset of this session, deserves our gratitude for the skill with which he ensured that we began our work without procedural delays, and for the consultations he carried out on the item of nuclear disarmament. In his statement last week, he offered us an overview depicting the state of the consultations, and announced that he would recommend to his successors in the Chair that they should continue the consultations to produce a consensus. It is no secret to anyone that the item is an important one, and my delegation is certain that you, Mr. President, will continue the laudable efforts made by Ambassador U Aye. I wish you success, which at this juncture would appear to be essential, and I offer you my full cooperation.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Mexico, Ambassador de Icaza, for his statement and for the kind words he addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Indonesia, Ambassador Tarmidzi.

Mr. TARMIDZI (Indonesia): To begin with, Mr. President, let me express the satisfaction of my delegation at seeing you - a representative of the Netherlands, with which my country enjoys outstanding relations - presiding over the Conference on Disarmament. I have full confidence that under your leadership, the Conference will be able to further its work to conclude the negotiations on the comprehensive test-ban treaty (CTBT), the foundation of which has been laid down by your predecessor, Ambassador Aye of Myanmar, whom I should sincerely thank for the excellent manner with which he conducted our previous deliberations.

It is a distinct privilege for me to take the floor in this plenary session after listening to the inspiring statement from His Excellency Mr. Ali Akbar Velayati, the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran. At this particular juncture, I would simply like to recall that all members of the Conference on Disarmament - whether they are States parties or non-States parties to the non-proliferation treaty - have committed themselves to conclude the CTBT in 1996. Genuine optimism was expressed, on a great number of occasions, to the effect that the goal to complete the treaty is within our grasp. A number of issues, such as, for example, scope, the verification system, especially matters related to the conduct of on-site inspection, the organization and entry into force, however, remain to be resolved.

As one of the countries which cherish the goal of a total ban on nuclear-weapons tests as a step towards the total elimination of these

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appalling weapons, Indonesia fully shares the Iranian concern that the negotiations on the CTBT be completed within a time-frame to which we all agreed. In this context, my delegation indeed appreciates the courageous initiative taken by the Iranian Government to present a draft as a positive contribution in an attempt to accelerate the conclusion of the negotiations this year. It is also encouraging to note that the text was not seen as an alternative, or a substitute for the current rolling text. Together with the rolling text, the draft, which has been presented to the Conference by His Excellency Mr. Ali Akbar Velayati, the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, could, if necessary, be used to search for a balanced compromise resolution to the unresolved issues with which we are confronted. Although, at the first reading of the draft proposals, some issues are not in line with the position of my delegation, nevertheless, Indonesia is ready to study the matter further. My delegation will, therefore, study that text carefully and subsequently submit it to the authorities concerned in Indonesia for a political decision.

Let me conclude by taking this opportunity to remind all participating States in the negotiations that two months have elapsed while no tangible results have been achieved as far as the outstanding issues are concerned. I would therefore like to repeat my appeal to all participating countries to redouble their efforts and to demonstrate their political will to conclude the CTBT within the agreed time-frame.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Indonesia for his statement and also for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Myanmar, Ambassador Aye.

Mr. AYE (Myanmar): As I take the floor for the first time during your presidency, allow me first to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the CD. I am confident that we shall enjoy productive results in the CD under your able guidance. Please be assured of my delegation's continued support and cooperation during your tenure.

May I take this opportunity to extend a very warm welcome to the honourable Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, His Excellency Dr. Ali Akbar Velayati? We have listened to his constructive statement and proposals on CTBT with keen interest. My delegation welcomes the presentation of a possible compromise text on a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty by the honourable Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran. We are all aware of the contribution made by the delegation of Iran to the work of the CD and this text will, no doubt, constitute another important input by Iran to the CTBT negotiations at this important juncture. My delegation's preliminary observation on this possible text is that it is indeed a compromise text and will provide a helpful basis for further negotiations. The text certainly deserves to be carefully studied. I would, accordingly, like to thank His Excellency Dr. Velayati for tabling this important document in the CD with a view to facilitating the ongoing CTBT negotiations.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Myanmar for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I give the floor to Ambassador Benjelloun-Touimi of Morocco.

Mr. BENJELLOUN-TOUIMI: (Morocco) (translated from French): Mr. President, I will have the pleasure of congratulating you at greater length on a future occasion. Today I would like to take the floor very briefly to welcome His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iran, Mr. Velayati, and to commend him for the clarity of his remarks, his reflections, his analyses, and thank him for his proposals. The Kingdom of Morocco and the Islamic Republic of Iran, which are both active members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, have close ties on the political, economic and cultural planes. The Moroccan delegation welcomes with interest the draft text presented by the Islamic Republic of Iran and takes note of the constructive proposals it contains. My country, faithful to its tradition of openness and dialogue, will continue to consider with flexibility any proposal which is likely to move our negotiations forward. My country takes note of the positive contribution and consistent efforts made by the Islamic Republic of Iran to enable a comprehensive test-ban treaty to be concluded before the end of this year.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Morocco for his statement and the kinds words he addressed to the Chair, and I give the floor to the distinguished representative of Sri Lanka, Ambassador Goonetilleke.

Mr. GOONETILLEKE (Sri Lanka): Mr. President, permit me to say how pleased my delegation is at seeing you presiding over the Conference at this crucial juncture. We are confident that the Conference will conduct its negotiations with added vigour with you presiding over the Conference, as well as functioning as the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on an NTB.

My delegation listened with great interest to the statement made by His Excellency Dr. Ali Akbar Velayati, Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran. While thanking him for his presence and the statement delivered by him this morning my delegation wishes to express its deep gratitude for the contribution made by him to help the CTBT negotiations by presenting a clean text of the draft CTBT contained in document CD/1384 of 21 February.

The Conference on Disarmament commenced its negotiations on a CTBT in 1994. There was a time when some delegations urged the Conference to complete negotiations by the end of that year. In retrospect, one has to admit that it was too ambitious a target. However, the fiftieth General Assembly, by its resolution 50/65, requested the CD to complete the final text of the treaty as soon as possible in 1996. Having listened to the statements made in this chamber since the beginning of the CD's 1996 session, it is crystal clear that there is a commonly held view that the CTBT negotiations should be completed in 1996 and every attempt should be made to complete this work by June at the latest. That being the case, we have to realize that the CD has to speed up its negotiations if it is to achieve its objective with regard to the time-frame. The speed with which we have been conducting our work thus far has justifiably made some delegations sceptical as to whether the CD will be

(Mr. Goonetilleke, Sri Lanka)

able to complete its negotiations by June. This has led some delegations, and groups of delegations, to consider the need for working at a faster pace. The Iranian initiative to present a clean text to the CD today is one such step to speed up the negotiations. As the days progress, there may be other initiatives as well.

Sri Lanka will welcome any initiative that will genuinely contribute towards the speeding up of our work. In this spirit, we would warmly welcome the Iranian text as it is bound to contain language which may help the Conference to decide on issues which are yet to be resolved by the negotiators. My delegation is, however, aware of the apprehensions entertained by some delegations that a new, clean text might delay the negotiations, given the prospect that their home authorities, who have thus far focused on the current rolling text contained in document CD/1364, will now be called upon to refocus on a new text. This will be the situation if an attempt is made at this stage to replace the present rolling text with a new one. On the other hand, such a move will lead to a protracted debate in the CD, thus consuming much-needed time and resources available to the Conference.

In my opinion, such a situation may not come to pass if the CD decides not to replace the present rolling text with a new text. In such a situation, delegations will have the benefit of having a clean text which can be referred to whenever there is a need for such reference. The honourable Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in his statement, clearly stated that the text contained in document CD/1384 was not meant to be a substitute to the present rolling text. My delegation is grateful for that clarification. Having said this, one should not completely exclude the possibility of having to rely upon an alternative text, should a situation develop in the CD warranting such a decision.

Finally, Mr President, I would like to thank you once again for giving me the floor and also thank His Excellency the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran for his contribution to our work for a CTBT at this crucial juncture.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Sri Lanka, Ambassador Goonetilleke, for his statement and kind words he addressed to the Chair. I would like to give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of Australia.

Mr. STARR (Australia): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. President, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference. You'll forgive my error in referring to you as a Chairman - that is undoubtedly your more familiar role - but we undoubtedly welcome you as President and look forward to cooperating with you in this field as well as in the field of the Ad Hoc Committee on an NTB.

(Mr. Starr, Australia)

I have listened most carefully to the statement by His Excellency the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran and I would like to welcome it as a contribution designed to assist the most important negotiating effort that we have this year, the negotiation of a comprehensive test-ban treaty.

I noted particularly that the statement brought forward a text which had been compiled after the most careful study: the divergences had been examined, the 1,200 or 1,300 brackets checked, and the Iranian officials undertaking that study had come to the conclusions that there were few distinct issues in front of us. The distinguished Ambassador of Mexico made a similar point, and I recall that I have similarly mentioned this to the Conference. It seems to me that the more delegations study the text, the more they come to the conclusion that the goal of concluding this treaty soon, in 1996, is feasible. We have heard this morning from several delegations reiteration of the objectives of delegations around this table that we can complete by the middle of the year. It has always been a matter of concern as to whether such completion if feasible. I believe that we have had this morning a contribution to an assessment that that goal is feasible and that we should be able to achieve it. Likewise, I am heartened by the shared sense of urgency that I have noted around this table. It came from His Excellency the Foreign Minister, but also other speakers, and there is an obvious desire to intensify and refocus and complete these negotiations. My delegation looks forward to working closely with these delegations and, I would hope, all around this table to achieve our objective.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Starr of Australia for his statement and for the kind words he addressed to the various Chairs behind this table. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Egypt, Ambassador Zahran.

Mr. ZAHRAN (Egypt) (translated from Arabic): Sir, I greet you as President and wish you every success not only as President of the Conference on Disarmament but also as Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban, in which we both work, I as Chairman of the Working Group on legal and institutional issues. We have been working together to make progress in negotiations on the CTBT. In that context, I should like to welcome the statement made by Dr. Ali Akbar Velayati, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic if Iran, and his contribution to the advancement of the negotiations on the treaty. We welcome any initiative that is likely to expedite the conclusion of negotiations on this important treaty, which we regard not only as a treaty on non-proliferation but also as an important step towards the objective which we all want to achieve, namely nuclear disarmament.

We have received the Iranian text of the treaty and we shall study it carefully in order to see how we can benefit from it in order to move the negotiations forward. We note that there is a measure of agreement on the rolling text and have taken cognizance of the statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iran that the proposed text is not a substitute for the basic negotiating text but rather a means of helping to expedite the conclusion of negotiations. We therefore welcome this initiative and hope that it will be helpful on matters on which there is still disagreement.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Egypt for his statement and also for his kind words addressed to the Chair. I wonder whether any other delegation wishes to take the floor at this stage? If this is not the case, I would like to draw your attention to the fact that the secretariat has circulated, at my request, a tentative timetable of meetings for next week. This timetable is, as usual, merely indicative and subject to change if necessary. On this understanding, may I assume that the timetable is acceptable?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: I should like to remind you that, in accordance with the timetable of meetings for this week, this plenary meeting will be followed immediately by a meeting of Working Group 2 of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on 29 February 1996 at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.